105 Prepositions

Prepositions are words that are used to show relationships between different parts of a clause, for example relationships of time, place, or reason.

See also:

Infinitives and participles **51** Verbs with prepositions **54** Singular and plural nouns **69** Personal pronouns **77**

105.1 SIMPLE PREPOSITIONS

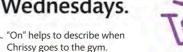
Prepositions describe the relationship between two other words. They are usually part of a prepositional phrase, which is made up of a preposition followed by an object (a noun, pronoun, or noun phrase).

"By" describes where the park is in relation to the house.

There's a beautiful park by my house.



Chrissy goes to the gym on Wednesdays.



105.2 COMPLEX PREPOSITIONS

Some prepositions are made up of two words which act as a single unit. They behave the same way as one-word prepositions.

The bank is next to the library.



105.3 PARALLEL PREPOSITIONS

When the same preposition applies to more than one word in a list, the preposition only needs to be used once.

I sent presents to AI and [to] Ed.



When different words need different prepositions, each preposition must be used.

Look at and listen to the teacher.



105.4 PREPOSITIONS AND GERUNDS

If a verb comes immediately after a preposition, it has to be a gerund, which is the "-ing" form of a verb.



After graduating, I worked in a hospital.



FURTHER EXAMPLES

Instead of applying for a job, I went to college.



After seeing the job listing, I wrote a cover letter.



105.5 PREPOSITIONS AT THE END OF SENTENCES

Prepositions can come in many different places in a sentence, including at the end.

I'm listening to some music.



I like having something to listen to.

105.6 "TO"

"To" can cause confusion because it can be a preposition, but it is also used to form infinitives.

Here, "to" is part of the infinitive verb "to see." When used like this, it is not a preposition.

Here, "to" is part of the phrasal verb "look forward to," and is a preposition. Therefore, it must be followed by a noun, pronoun, or gerund.

I'm going to see my friends tonight.

I'm looking forward to seeing them.





106 Prepositions of place

Prepositions of place are used to relate the position or location of one thing to another. Using a different preposition usually changes the meaning of a sentence.

See also:

Question words **35** Prepositions **105**

106.1 "IN," "AT," AND "ON"

"In" is used to position something or someone inside a large area or in a three-dimensional space.

The Louvre is in Paris.



David is in his bedroom.



"In" positions David - inside his bedroom.

"At" is used to talk about an exact point.

Turn left at the next corner.



Let's meet at the restaurant.





"On" is used to position something in line with, next to, on top of, or attached to something else. I love traveling on trains.



There's a spider on the floor!



FURTHER EXAMPLES

They live in a hot country.



I will meet you at the beach.



I like that picture on the wall.



The dog is sleeping in his basket.



Jane is working <mark>at</mark> her desk.



The books are on the table.





Some prepositions of place show the precise position or location of something in relation to something else. They can be used to answer a "where" question.



The bird is flying above the cat.



The bird is sitting on top of the tree.



The dog usually sits between Ed and Ben.



The cat is under beneath below

the table.



Jack is $\left\{\begin{array}{c} \text{next to} \\ \text{near} \end{array}\right\}$ the tree



The basket is in front of the cat.



Jack is hiding behind the tree.



Sally sits opposite Fred at work.

FURTHER EXAMPLES

There's a sign above the door.



There's a mouse underneath the bed!



My house is near a lovely park.



.

The table is opposite the television.



I was stuck behind a truck all the way home.



I like those photos on top of the bookshelf.



107 Prepositions of time

Prepositions of time are often used to talk about schedules and routines. They give information about when something happens, and how long it lasts.

See also:

Present perfect continuous **12**Prepositions **105**

107.1

"ON"

"On" is often used before days of the week to say when something happens.

I work on Mondays.

In US English the preposition can be left out.

"-s" can be added to the day of the week to show that the thing happens regularly on that day.





FURTHER EXAMPLES

The library is closed on Sundays.



I'm going shopping on Saturday.



I have orchestra practice on Fridays.



I'll visit my grandparents on Monday.



107.2

"AT"

"At" is usually used to express what time something happens.

I leave the house at 8am.



FURTHER EXAMPLES

They are meeting at 1 o'clock.



I have an appointment at 7 o'clock.



I have a yoga class at lunchtime.



I get the bus at half past 8.



107.3 "ON" AND "AT" WITH "THE WEEKEND"

When talking about the weekend, US English uses "on," whereas UK English uses "at."



107.4 "IN"

"In" has a similar meaning as "during" and is used before months, years, seasons, and general times of day, e.g. "morning" and "afternoon."

I go to the gym in the morning.



FURTHER EXAMPLES

I usually watch TV in the evening.





I was born in 1973.



I enjoy gardening in summer.



107.5 "PAST" AND "TO"

"Past" and "to" are prepositions of time that are mainly used when telling the time.

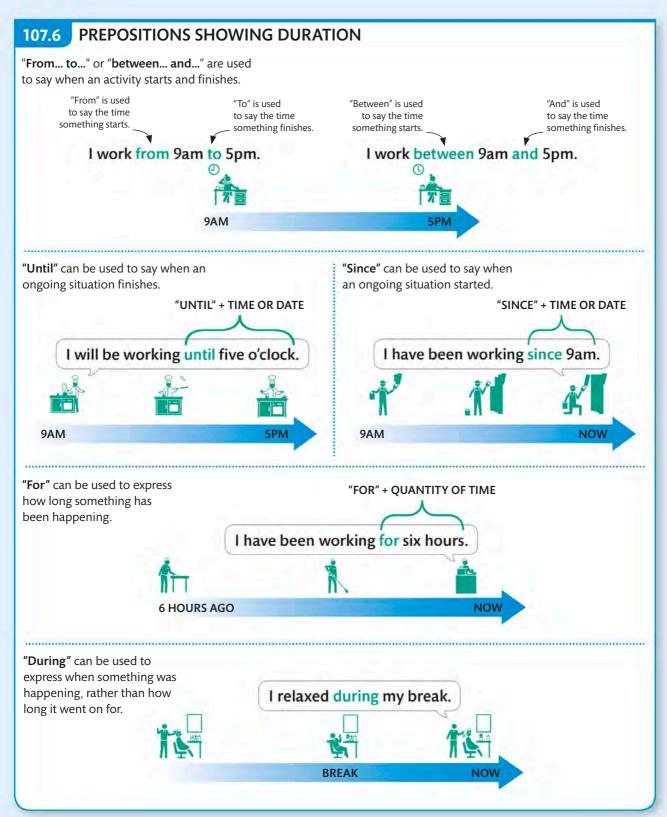
It's twenty past seven. "Past" means "after the hour."



"To" means "until the hour."

It's twenty to seven.







COMMON MISTAKES TENSES WITH "SINCE"

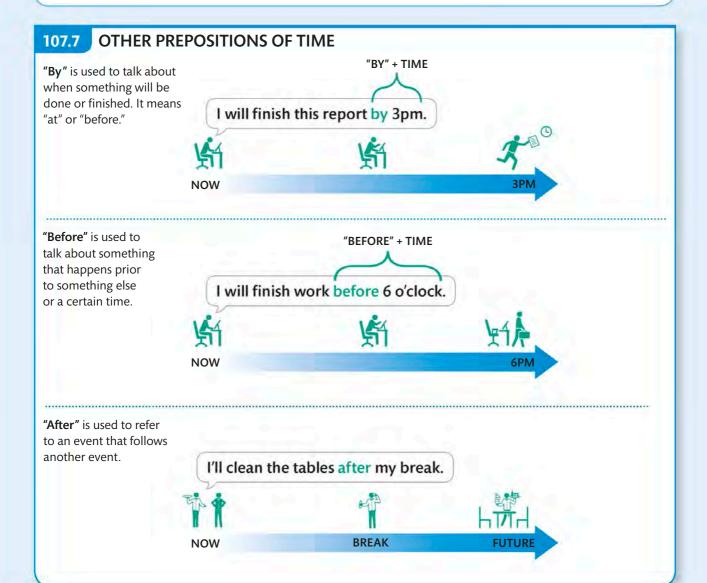
"Since" is usually used with perfect tenses with reference to the past. It is not used with the present simple.

The present perfect continuous is often used with since.

Tim has been working here since last year.

Tim works here since last year.

Since can't be used with the present simple.



108 Other prepositions

Prepositions can be used to express relationships other than place and time, such as origin, ownership, and absence.

See also:

The passive **24** Verb patterns with prepositions **54** Prepositions **105**

108.1 "BY"

"By" has several common uses in English.

When used to talk about an action, it refers to something that is done to achieve a certain result. I fixed my television by hitting it.



It is used to say who wrote or made something.

I'm reading 1984 by George Orwell.



It is used to talk about methods of travel.

I always go to work by train.

"On foot" is an exception to this rule.



It can be used to form the passive voice.

This was painted by a famous artist.



FURTHER EXAMPLES

I broke my phone by dropping it in a puddle.



It's too far to walk into town. It's much easier to go by bus.



This show is based on a short story by Jane Austen



That new building was designed by a famous architect.



108.2 "WITH" AND "WITHOUT"

"With" has several common uses in English.

It can mean "accompanied by."

I went to a restaurant with my wife.



It is used to talk about possession.

I want a job with a good salary.

(B) 0.

It is used to talk about the thing used to perform an action.

I cut this apple with a knife.



"Without" is used to talk about the absence of something.

Vera came to the party without a gift.



FURTHER EXAMPLES

I need to move somewhere with better phone reception.



Christina paid for the dress with her credit card.



I need to hire someone with excellent computer skills.

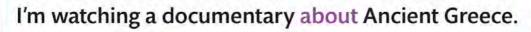


Wait! Don't leave without me!



108.3 "ABOUT"

"About" is mainly used to mean "on the subject of."





FURTHER EXAMPLES

I'm going to call the bank about their bad service.



I'm sorry, but I have no idea what you're talking about.



109 Dependent prepositions

Some words must be followed by a specific preposition, called a dependent preposition. These words can be adjectives, verbs, or nouns.

See also:

Types of verbs **49** Singular and plural nouns **69** Adjectives **92** Prepositions **105**

109.1 ADJECTIVES WITH DEPENDENT PREPOSITIONS

Some adjectives are always followed by the same preposition when used in a sentence.

ADJECTIVE + PREPOSITION



It was good of my friend to offer to babysit last night.

Some adjectives can take one of a choice of prepositions in the same sentence without changing their meaning.

"Surprised" can be followed by either "at" or by without a change in meaning.



You seemed surprised



their behavior

FURTHER EXAMPLES

The babysitter was angry about looking after naughty children.



My parents are annoyed with me for not cleaning my room.



My friends are getting ready for their new baby.



The children are impressed by practical jokes.



Janine is tired of watching children's shows on TV.



She is excited about going hiking in the mountains.



109.2 VERBS WITH DEPENDENT PREPOSITIONS

Some verbs are followed by a specific preposition before an object. Different verbs are followed by different prepositions.





The head chef used to shout at the staff to encourage them to work harder.

FURTHER EXAMPLES

The café was counting on the new menu to impress its customers.



The café advertised for another chef to join the team.



The head chef spoke to the manager about hiring more kitchen staff.



What do you think about leaving early on Fridays?



109.3 VERBS WITH "TO" OR "FOR"

Some verbs can take either "to" or "for," depending on the context. "To" is usually used when there is a transfer of something, whereas "for" is used when someone benefits from something.



He sold the house to the family.

[The family bought the house.]



He sold the house for the family.

[He sold the house on behalf of the family.]

109.4 NOUNS WITH DEPENDENT PREPOSITIONS

Some nouns are always followed by the same preposition when used in a sentence.

NOUN + PREPOSITION

I always keep a photograph of my family on my desk.



Some nouns can take one of a choice of prepositions in the same sentence without changing their meaning.

"Advantages" can be followed by either "in" or "to" without a change in meaning.



There are advantages



moving away to study.

FURTHER EXAMPLES

It is important to have a positive attitude toward studying.



The cause of traffic jams is often bad town planning.



I've been working hard to find a solution to this problem.



There has been a steady increase in students passing their exams.



The demand for public buses increases every year.



Take your time planning a response to the essay question.



109.5 WORDS WITH DIFFERENT DEPENDENT PREPOSITIONS

Some adjectives, verbs, and nouns can be followed by a choice of prepositions. The meaning of the phrase is dependent on which preposition the adjective, verb, or noun is paired with.

I'm anxious for my vacation to start.



[I'm excited for my vacation.]

I'm anxious about being late for my flight.

[I'm worried I'm going to miss my flight.]



He talked to the teacher.



[He had a conversation with the teacher.]

He talked about the teacher.



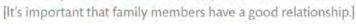
[He had a conversation with someone else, discussing the teacher.]

I have a good relationship with my parents.



[The relationship between me and my parents is good.]

The relationship between family members is important.





FURTHER EXAMPLES

I'm upset about how badly my exams went.



The charity needs to appeal for more volunteers.



Pests are a serious problem for farmers.



I'm upset with myself for failing my exams.



The campaigns appeal to students.



Farmers have a serious problem with pests.

